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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

★ AUG 31 1934 ★
Thursday, September 6, 1934.
U. S. Department of Agriculture

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "How the Drought Affects Our Food Situation." Information from the United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

The other day I sent a special request, marked RUSH, to the Bureau of Home Economics. Somebody had asked me an important question, and I wanted to be sure of the facts before I answered it. The question was this: "What effect will the drought have on our food supply during the next few months? Will there be enough food to go around?"

Of course, I knew that the drought of 1934 had done more damage to crops and pastures than any other drought in history -- but knowing how big our country is, and how diversified the crops, I couldn't believe that even such a disaster as the drought would cause us to starve next winter.

Well, my friends in the Bureau of Home Economics sent me reassuring news. They told me that Mr. N. A. Olsen, Chief of the United States Bureau of Agricultural Economics, had summed up the situation in these words:

"Stocks of bread grains will supply our people and leave a normal carryover next year; production of canning crops will be about normal; fruits and vegetables fairly abundant outside the drought country; meat, dairy and poultry products adequate for the remainder of this year.

"Thanks to the great size of our country" (I'm still quoting Mr. Olsen) "and the efficiency of its farmers, even this disaster has not robbed us of the means of human sustenance. It has confronted us with a huge problem of bringing the afflicted farm families through the winter, and leaving them equipped with seed and livestock to carry on in the future; of moving great quantities of foods and feeds from the places of abundance to those of scarcity; and of seeing to it that farm and city families whose buying power has been wiped out do not starve."

Now, having given you Mr. Olsen's summary of the food situation, I'm going to tell you how Dr. Hazel Stiebeling, of the United States Bureau of Home Economics, advises us to adjust our diet to the food supply.

Doctor Stiebeling assures us that there's food enough for the coming months, and food of such kinds that health need not suffer. We'll have bread and grain products in abundance. That's good, because the cereal foods are important and inexpensive sources of calories and protein.

Our supplies of vegetables and fruits will probably be somewhat less than normal. So this year it is up to us to try harder than ever to reduce spoilage and waste. If we do this, there will be practically no shortage. That is good

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news, too, for fruits and vegetables go a long way in furnishing vitamins and minerals. There may even be a surplus of some fruits and vegetables. Tomatoes, for example. It looks now as if we'd have one-fifth more tomatoes than we usually eat.

In some sections of the country, people are planting more fall and winter gardens than ever before. They're raising more soybeans and field beans. While they are green, soybeans can take the place of other green vegetables. When they are mature, they can be used in place of meat, if the meat supply runs low. The protein of soybeans is much like that of the "efficient" protein of lean meat and eggs.

Now as for poultry and eggs and dairy products -- there will be no serious shortage for the country as a whole. If milk supplies happen to be short in our section, of course we'll have to serve the children first, for there's no food that can take the place of milk in children's diets.

There will be plenty of fats and sugars -- foods important for their energy value. So far, I've mentioned the foods we'll have in normal or almost normal quantities. As a matter of fact, these foods furnish the major part of our nutriment.

It is on meats that the drought has had the most pronounced effect, and it may turn out that our meat supply will be about a quarter less than usual. This will mean a cut of about six per cent in the protein supply of the American diet. But beans and grain products also supply protein; if necessary they can take the place of some of the meat. Doctor Stiebeling says that as a nation we eat more protein, on the average, than is needed for health according to physiological standards. So we have no need to worry if we reduce the protein part of our diet by six per cent.

Much of the meat we buy next winter may be somewhat lower in quality and higher in price than usual. This means we'll have to think up new ways to extend the flavor of meat, so our families will have appetizing meals. We have enough food to nourish us adequately, but we may be called upon to try new foods or to try old foods in new ways. Miss Ruth Van Deman, with the Bureau of Home Economics, reminded me that we should be particularly careful to keep the right balance between the different kinds of foods we need. Keep in mind the different groups of foods the body needs, and why, says Miss Van Deman, and then you can substitute for the ones that are scarce and still keep your diet well balanced.

Miss Stiebeling and other food specialists in the Bureau have worked out a very simple diet plan called "Getting the Most for Your Money." This describes ever so briefly what different types of food our bodies need, and tells how to divide the food dollar so as to get the most food value at small cost. Many of you have already written to the Bureau for a copy of "Getting the Most for Your Food Money." Copies are still available for anyone who wants help in planning meals for good nutrition.

From time to time this winter -- as they know definitely what foods will be scarce and what foods will be plentiful -- the food specialists will send me suggestions from their laboratories, and I'll pass them along to you. For one thing, there are plenty of savory dishes to be made from the less tender cuts of meat, if well-marbled steaks and chops and roasts get too far out of sight. There are some good recipes for soybeans, too. We'll have to get acquainted with Soybean Croquettes and Soybean Soup -- and other nutritious dishes.

